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THE MINERS' UNION: ITS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

BY FRANK JULIAN WARNE, PH. D.

The United Mine Workers of America has a total membership in the United States exceeding 300,000. Its officials claim for it the distinction of being the strongest and largest single trade union in the world. It is well organized in at least ten of the twenty-seven coal-producing states, and is gradually extending its power into all of the twenty-seven. About 75 per cent. of all the coal mine employees in the country are at present members of the union; more than 85 per cent. of the total of 486,000 are governed by the union's scales and work under its conditions of employment, and, the officials of the union claim, fully 90 per cent. of all coal mine workers in the United States would go out on a strike if a national suspension of coal mining is ever found to be necessary by the union.

The general scheme of organization of the United Mine Workers bears a close resemblance, in many of its features, to that of our political organization. It is composed of national, district, sub-district and local unions. The jurisdiction of the national union is intended to cover the entire coal-producing area of the country. At present it is effective in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, the hard coal fields of Pennsylvania and in portions of the central and western bituminous coal fields of that state. It also extends into Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Michigan, Arkansas, Indian Territory, Colorado, New Mexico, Montana and Texas.

Subject to the constitution of the national union and the legislation of the national convention the district union, as a general thing, has jurisdiction over a particular state. This is due to the convenience of state line divisions. There are exceptions, however. In Pennsylvania, for example, owing to the unusual prominence of the coal-producing area of that state, there are six districts—Numbers 1, 7 and 9, in the anthracite region; District 2, in the Clearfield

or central soft coal field; District 5, in the Pittsburg or western bituminous coal field, and District 16, which also includes Maryland. In Indiana, District 8 covers the block coal field, and District 11 the bituminous coal territory of that state. In a few cases one district extends over more than one state—District 17 includes Virginia as well as West Virginia; District 21 takes in Arkansas and Indian Territory. Under the constitution and legislation of the district union are the sub-district unions. These sub-district unions have been made a feature of the organization in order that special regulation may be secured, in particular cases, for widely varying conditions, which prevail in almost every state, without placing the whole district in jeopardy when only small areas are affected. Within the jurisdiction of the sub-district are the local unions—the units making up the district and national unions. The local union is the smallest of the four unions. It usually has jurisdiction over the mine workers at a particular colliery or mine. It must have at least ten members. Over all the unions the constitution and legislation of the national union, and the agreement of the Interstate Joint Conference, which latter is entered into between representatives of operators and mine workers, takes precedence and are supreme. The district exercises authority and governing surveillance over the sub-districts, and the sub-district over the locals. Each union, however, has its own constitution and by-laws, its own officers and conventions and it legislates for its own particular area within the authority granted to it.

The United Mine Workers of America is one of the most democratic, with the possibility of it all at once becoming one of the most autocratic of any organization in the world. It is democratic in the sense that in the final analysis its policy and management is in the hands of its members. All power vests with them in their collective capacity. To them, in their local unions, every great question affecting the national union is referred sooner or later; from the local unions come the final decisions on all such questions. They nominate and elect, by direct vote of the members, the president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer; they indirectly, through their particular districts, elect the members of the National Executive Board; they choose the delegates that make up the national convention; they send instructions to this convention; upon most of the recommendations made to this convention by the president they instruct their delegates before the convention assembles how they

are to vote; they not only choose the national and their own local officers, but, through regularly elected delegates, they compose the sub-districts and districts, and through these determine the policy that is to be adopted in any particular instance.

Once a year representatives of the local unions meet in regular convention as the national union, usually at Indianapolis, beginning the third Monday in January, and for ten days or two weeks outline the policy of the national union for the ensuing year. This convention possesses absolute power; there is nothing affecting the organization it cannot do even to altering or amending its fundamental law—the constitution. It can even abrogate, if it so chooses, the agreement of the Interstate Joint Conference. The representatives to this convention are elected directly by the local unions on the basis of one vote in the convention for each one hundred members (or less), and an additional vote for each one hundred members or majority fraction thereof. No representative, however, can cast more than five votes on any question. The representative must be “a miner or mine worker or employed by the organization” and a member in good standing of a local union in the district where he resides.¹ The constitution of the national union interprets the term “miner or mine worker” as meaning “any one working in or around the mines *and a member of a local union.*” No member of the United Mine Workers occupying a position other than that of a miner or mine worker, excepting those holding positions with the organization, is eligible as representative to any sub-district, district or national convention. Special conventions, the delegates to which must possess the above qualifications, are provided for by the constitution.

The purpose of the national convention is to legislate on any question pertaining to the objects of the organization. These objects are expressed in the preamble to the constitution. “There is no fact more generally known, or more widely believed,” says this preamble, “than that without coal there would not have been any such grand achievements, privileges and blessings as those which characterize the twentieth century civilization, and believing as we do, that those whose lot it is to daily toil in the recesses of the earth, mining and putting out this coal which makes these blessings possible, are entitled to a fair and equitable share of the same: therefore, we have formed ‘The United Mine Workers of America,’ for the

¹ Section 2, Article V, of the Constitution.

purpose of the more readily securing the objects sought by educating all mine workers in America to realize the necessity of unity of action and purpose, in demanding and securing by lawful means the just fruits of our toil." The objects of the organization are declared to be:

First. To secure an earning fully compatible with the dangers of our calling and the labor performed.

Second. To establish as speedily as possible, and forever, our right to receive pay for labor performed, in lawful money, and to rid ourselves of the iniquitous system of spending our money wherever our employers see fit to designate.

Third. To secure the introduction of any and all well-defined and established appliances for the preservation of life, health and limbs of all mine employees.

Fourth. To reduce to the lowest possible minimum the awful catastrophes which have been sweeping our fellow-craftsmen to untimely graves by the thousands; by securing legislation looking to the most perfect system of ventilation, drainage, etc.

Fifth. To enforce existing laws; and where none exist, enact and enforce them; calling for a plentiful supply of suitable timber for supporting the roof, pillars, etc., and to have all working places rendered as free from water and impure air and poisonous gases as possible.

Sixth. To uncompromisingly demand that eight hours shall constitute a day's work, and that not more than eight hours shall be worked in any one day by any mine worker. The very nature of our employment, shut out from the sunlight and pure air, working by the aid of artificial light (in no instance to exceed one candle power), would, in itself, strongly indicate that, of all men, a coal miner has the most righteous claim to an eight-hour day.

Seventh. To provide for the education of our children by lawfully prohibiting their employment until they have attained a reasonably satisfactory education, and in every case until they have attained fourteen years of age.

Eighth. To abrogate all laws which enable coal operators to cheat the miners, and to substitute laws which enable the miner, under the protection and majesty of the state, to have his coal properly weighed or measured, as the case may be.

Ninth. To secure, by legislation, weekly payments in lawful money.

Tenth. To render it impossible, by legislative enactment in every state, for coal operators or corporations to employ Pinkerton detectives or guards, or other forces (except the ordinary forces of the state) to take armed possession of the mines in cases of strikes or lockouts.

Eleventh. To use all honorable means to maintain peace between ourselves and employers; adjusting all differences, so far as possible, by arbitration and conciliation, that strikes may become unnecessary.

The means for obtaining these ends are declared to be conciliation, arbitration or strikes. All three methods have been employed in the course of the union's existence.

In order to carry out the policy of the national convention, to enforce the constitution and for the conduct of the business of the national union, there is a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer and an Executive Board, whose terms of office are from April 1 to March 31 of each year. These officials, with the exception of the Executive Board, are nominated by the local unions (a candidate must be nominated by at least three locals) and they are elected, during the first week in December of each year, by a majority of the popular vote of the members voting who are in good standing at that time in the national, district or local unions. Any member in good standing in the organization is eligible to hold office in the national union, provided he is not a salaried officer of a district at the same time and has been a member of a local union for one year preceding his election. The nominations are made by the locals on specially prepared blanks two months before the annual national convention. Every candidate thus nominated must be notified and his consent secured before his name is placed on the ballots. These are then sent to the locals from the national offices not later than six weeks before the convention is to assemble. Each member present in his local union meeting at the time of the election has one vote for each officer to be chosen. Severe penalties are attached to the violation, by any officer and local union, of the constitutional provisions governing the election. Not later than twenty days prior to the national convention the ballot of each local must be sent, in special envelopes, sealed, and marked "election returns," addressed to the national secretary-treasurer, and by this officer deposited in an unopened ballot box. Only the national auditors, or their alternates, who are also selected by popular vote, are to open this box. The result of this election as canvassed by them is reported to the national convention which declares elected to the respective offices those candidates receiving the majority of the votes cast. In case there is no election under this provision, then the convention chooses the national officers, each delegate casting by ballot the number of votes for which his local has paid per capita tax.

This referendum plan for selecting the officers of the national union became effective for the first time in 1902 and is still to be

regarded in its experimental stage. It has not given satisfaction, as recent elections have demonstrated that the rank and file take very little interest in balloting for the candidates except in those districts where strikes are in progress, or had just been closed, or were about to be inaugurated. A scheme is now under advisement to make participation in the annual election for national officers compulsory by fining members who do not vote unless a sufficient excuse can be given. Formerly the election of national officers was by delegates to the national convention. Under this plan it was possible to elect a national officer with less than a majority of the votes of the members of the local unions. It was also possible for officers or candidates to manipulate the election, or form a combination to control the affairs of the organization and perpetuate themselves in power. The plan of election by popular vote was designed to obviate these defects.

When the national convention is not in session all power under its legislation and the constitution of the national union is vested in the national officers. During this time, which is for all but about two weeks of the year, supreme authority is, in the final analysis, in the hands of one man—the national president. In case of conflict of policy, the decision of the president is final. He has power to suspend or remove any national officer “for insubordination or just and sufficient cause”;² he temporarily fills all vacancies in the national offices. The constitution provides that in the exercise of the power of removal and appointment he shall have the consent of the Executive Board, but he can suspend or remove the members of this board. He has strong influence over them in still another way: as members of the board these officers receive no salary, but nearly all of them are paid \$4.00 a day and expenses as organizers. Their positions as organizers depend entirely upon appointment by the president. Besides, the president with the vice-president and secretary-treasurer are members of the board. It convenes at his call and is presided over by him. He decides all questions of dispute concerning the meaning of the constitution; he signs all bills and official documents; he determines the salaries of all employees with \$3.50 or less a day and who are not elected by the national convention. He presides at all national conventions, both regular and special. Usually he presents an address to these gatherings, review-

² Section 2, Article II, of the Constitution.

ing the work of the national union and recommending whatever action he deems best upon any question before the organization. His recommendations are generally adopted. He calls special national conventions when instructed by the Executive Board, or requested by five districts. He also summons conventions of two or more districts. He may, at any time, in person or through a national officer, visit local unions, district or sub-district conventions and any other places connected with the organization; he may appoint representatives to examine the financial accounts of any local union and instruct its officers in their duties; in brief, he exercises general supervision over the workings of all the unions—local, sub-district, district, as well as national. In 1902 he was paid a salary of \$1,800. This amount has since been increased to \$3,000. He is required to devote his time and attention to the organization.

No strike can be ordered by any district, nor can final action be taken upon any questions directly or indirectly affecting the interests of the mine workers of another district, until the approval of the national president is secured in writing, or, he having disapproved, until favorable action upon an appeal from his decision has been taken by the Executive Board. An exception to this, of course, is in case the strike or action has been ordered by the national convention. Local strikes are under the jurisdiction of the district officers. Together with the other national officers, the president has the power to order a suspension of mining operations by members of the union in any district or districts where such action is deemed advisable for the settlement of a strike in another district, or for the good of the union. The national officers form districts and assign to them the number of men and the extent of territory they are to have jurisdiction over; and they may at any time change the boundary and jurisdiction of any district.

The vesting of such great power, by the United Mine Workers of America, in the hands of one man is due primarily to the exigencies of strike times when, for all practical purposes, the union becomes a military-like organization in the control of which there must not be the least possibility of divided leadership. Labor unions have been taught through sad experience, and none more so than the United Mine Workers, that an industrial army moving for higher wages and better conditions of employment must have but one commander-in-chief if the possibility of defeat is to be reduced to a minimum.

Next in importance to the president in the conduct of the national union is the Executive Board. This board is in a sense the organization's board of directors. It is composed of one member from each district. Unlike the selection of the president, the members of this board are not chosen directly by the local unions, but by the district conventions made up of delegates elected by the locals—somewhat like the choosing of United States Senators by State Legislatures. At the present time there are twenty-three members, one each from the twenty districts throughout the country, and the president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer who are members *ex-officio*. This makes the board too large and unwieldy for expediting business and recently, with the rapid spread of the union and the consequent increase in the number of districts, this question has come to be a very serious one to the officers of the organization. It is more than probable that before long some other plan for selecting the board members will be substituted. Formerly, the national convention elected the six or eight members of the board. Another objection to the board, as at present constituted, is that each member has one vote in its deliberations. This gives to a district having only 2,000 members (such as District 16 in Maryland), as much voting influence as a district having 75,000 mine workers (such as District 1 in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania). This makes it possible for board members representing but 20 per cent. of the total membership to determine the policy of the national union when the convention is not in session. The evil of this defect is somewhat lessened in its scope by the constitutional provision making necessary a vote of two-thirds of the members of the board before a general strike or national suspension order can be issued, and by the power of suspension and removal lodged with the president. The evil of this inequality in the voting strength of the districts in the board has been made still less serious as a result of the anthracite strike in 1902. In the convention of 1903, following that memorable struggle, President Mitchell, in his annual address, said on this point: "Our membership in the anthracite fields represents practically 40 per cent. of the total membership of the organization, while the voting strength of the three members of the National Executive Board from the anthracite field is only about 15 per cent. of the voting strength of the national organization on the Executive Board." He stated that he did not believe

any advantage would be taken of this disproportionate representation, "but in order to overcome what appears to be a plausible objection on the part of the anthracite railway presidents to recognition of our union, I should recommend that upon the question of inaugurating a strike in the anthracite field, the anthracite members of the National Executive Board be given equal voting power with the members of the Executive Board from the bituminous fields. Upon all other questions the voting strength of the members of the board may remain as at present." This recommendation of the president was adopted by the convention in passing an amendment to the constitution providing that each member in the Executive Board, in voting on the question of a general strike or suspension, "shall have one vote, and one additional vote for every 5,000 members in good standing they represent, or a majority fraction thereof."

This Executive Board, including the president, wields power next in importance to that of the national convention; in fact, it executes the orders of the national convention and between conventions exercises full power to direct the workings of the national union, including the levying and collecting of assessments. Not only does it have the power to order a general strike or suspension, but it can overrule, upon appeal, the decisions of district officers upon questions affecting strikes within the district. It is also a court of appeal upon questions affecting the interests of two or more districts, excepting in those cases where the national convention has taken action. The board convenes upon the order of the President, its presiding officer or chairman, or of the secretary-treasurer at the request of eleven of its members. It may at any time instruct the president to call a special national convention. It holds in trust for the national union all moneys in the treasury over \$15,000. Among its other duties is that of a National Board of Conciliation and Arbitration.

Nearly all the members of the Executive Board are employed by the president as national organizers. As such they receive \$4.00 a day and expenses. These are the "walking delegates." They bear the brunt of the fight, are always to be found in the thickest of it and generally constitute the advance guard of the field force of the organization when an invasion of territory heretofore unorganized is decided upon. They are the missionaries of the new doctrine as to the rights of man; they usually are compelled to blaze it forth

to their kind in a wilderness of conflicting passions and class hatreds; they are met with suspicion and bitter antagonism even from those they would save from industrial servitude. These organizers are of many tongues; they go among strange peoples from many climes. They teach their doctrine of unionism alike to the Negro, the Slav, the Lithuanian, the Greek, the German, the Englishman and the American. Through months and even years of bitter antagonism, of almost crushing opposition, they work patiently at their tasks to bring the many nationalities into the organization and to mould the heterogeneous mass into unity of belief and action. Fearless and undaunted they bear persecution and suffer imprisonment and even death for the faith that is in them. However far apart one's views may be from the ends and objects professed by these organizers, if he could but see the spirit of martyrdom often exhibited by them, he would believe, as the writer does, that they are performing a real and a lasting work as pioneers in the formation of our industrial state.

These organizers, going into coal fields whose mine workers are outside the national union, begin their task by getting into personal touch with the men. They stop them on the street corners, visit the places in which they are in the habit of congregating, distribute among them tracts containing information about the organization and in various other ways plant the idea of unionism in the minds of a few of the men. From these few it spreads, at first almost unobservable, until gradually more and more of the workers begin talking about "the union" and by degrees nearly all the employees of the mine, or, where the mines are in close proximity, the employees of a number of mines, are discussing the objects and benefits of organization. When he thinks the time opportune, the organizer calls a meeting of those he believes interested in the movement and organizes them into a local union. They secure a charter and other supplies from the national headquarters for \$15.00 and are assigned a number by which the local is to be officially known. In cases, the jurisdiction of a local may extend to two or more collieries or mines, but as a rule it is confined to the employees of a single mine. Where a mining plant employs several thousand men, they are organized into a number of locals, according usually to nationality, or language or place of residence in case they are scattered in nearby mining towns.

Once the national union gains a foothold in a coal field its spread is rapid or slow depending upon the particular conditions encountered. Miners, mine laborers and other workmen, skilled and unskilled, employed in and about the mine, excepting the mine manager and the top boss, may join its ranks. No one is excluded because of race, color or nationality. Each member is expected to pay twenty-five cents a month as dues and whatever assessments are levied. He is provided with a "due card" upon which the amounts paid by him are entered. This card is his evidence of membership. (In some coal fields, in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania for example, where the union is not recognized by the operators, the members wear buttons in the lapels of their coats as indicating membership in the organization.) Provision is made for issuing transfer cards when members go from one mine to another. Local unions are compelled to accept all properly made out transfer cards and must admit the holder to membership provided he has been a member of the organization for at least three months. No member in good standing who holds a due or transfer card "shall be debarred or hindered from obtaining work on account of race, creed or nationality."³ When any member is suspended or discharged from his place at the mine, a committee of the local (the mine committee) makes an investigation, and if it finds that the member is not guilty of an offense justifying his discharge, the grievance is reported in writing to the sub-district and district presidents and if, upon investigation, they find the report of the committee to be correct it is made their duty to insist upon the reinstatement of the suspended or discharged member. Members of the locals elect their own officers every six months and legislate for their own particular area subject to the constitutions of the national, district and sub-district unions. Each local is compelled to become a part of and to contribute to the sub-district located within its district before it can secure representation in either the district or national unions, and to secure the benefits of the national union the local must at all times be in good standing with the national, district and sub-district unions. All locals three months or more in arrears for dues or assessments are published each month by the national secretary-treasurer. This is called the "unfair list" by the locals in good standing.

It is in the local union that strikes usually have their origin. Its

³ Section 3, Article VII, of the Constitution,

members are the workers in and about the mines and are the first to feel the effects of the adverse conditions of employment which give rise to grievances. Whenever any difference arises between the members of a local and their employers it is made the duty of the officers of that local to endeavor to effect an amicable adjustment, and failing in this to notify the officers of the district having jurisdiction over the particular local. If the district officers, after an investigation of the cause of the complaint, fail to effect a peaceable settlement "on a basis that would be fair and just to aggrieved members,"⁴ and find that a strike would best serve the interests of the particular locality, they may order the inauguration of a strike. The local has the right of appeal from the decision of the district officers to the National Executive Board. Local strikes not approved by the district officers, or the National Executive Board, are not supported by the district, and any local union striking in violation of these provisions may not be recognized by the national officers. In fact, such unauthorized action on the part of a local union has resulted in its being deprived of its charter. Suspension of local unions has occurred on several occasions during the past five or six years. The charter of a local union at Salineville, Ohio, was revoked in 1902 because it engaged in a strike disapproved by the national officers.

No district can take final action upon questions that directly or indirectly affect the interests of the mine workers of another district, or that require a strike to determine, until the president and secretary of the aggrieved district "shall jointly prepare, sign and forward to the national president a written statement setting forth the grievances complained of, the action contemplated by the district, together with the reasons therefor, and the national president shall, within five days after the receipt of such statement, either approve or disapprove of the action contemplated by the aggrieved district, and such approval or disapproval, together with the reasons therefor, shall be made in writing, and a copy forwarded to the secretary of the complaining district. Should the action contemplated by the aggrieved district receive the approval of the national president, the district shall be free to act, but should the national president disapprove the action contemplated, the district may appeal to the National Executive Board, which shall be convened to con-

⁴ Section 1, Article X, of the Constitution.

sider such appeal within five days after its receipt by the national secretary. Until the national president has approved, or the National Executive Board has sustained the appeal, no district shall be free to enter upon a strike unless it shall have been ordered by a national convention."⁵ . . . "The national officers shall, at any time they deem it to the best interest of mine workers in a district that is idle, for just and sufficient reasons, order a suspension in any other district or districts that would in any way impede the settlement of the district affected: provided, that such action would conserve to the best interest of the United Mine Workers of America."⁶

As the machinery for the inauguration of a strike is first put in motion by the local union, so does the success of the strike depend to a large degree upon the support given by the locals, not only by those whose members happen to be on strike but by those in other fields whose members remain at work. The members of the locals constitute the rank and file of the organization—they are the privates, corporals and sergeants of the great army of mine workers moving toward an improvement in the conditions of their employment. In peace times they prepare the organization for strikes by contributing, in dues and assessments, to the district and national unions besides providing for their own local treasuries. So well did they do this in 1902 that immediately upon the special national convention issuing its appeal for relief to carry on the anthracite mine workers strike, District 12 (Illinois) contributed \$50,000 from its treasury; District 8 (Indiana), \$10,000; District 11 (Indiana), \$8,000; District 13 (Iowa), \$5,000; District 2 (Central Pennsylvania), \$3,259.50; and Districts 25 (Missouri) and 20 (Alabama), \$1,000 each. Only a month before this appeal was issued District 12 (Illinois) had contributed \$50,000 for the conduct of the strike in the two Virginias, making \$100,000 from one district alone within two months for carrying on strikes. Besides the districts, the sub-districts and locals in all the organized coal producing states contributed in the aggregate a large sum from their respective treasuries to prosecute the strike of the anthracite miners.

Under the constitution every local union is required to pay into the national treasury a per capita tax of ten cents a month for each member and such additional assessments as may be levied by the

⁵ Section 2, Article X, of the Constitution,

⁶ Section 3, Article X, of the Constitution.

National Executive Board. Boys under sixteen years of age are regarded as half members and pay one-half as much tax and assessment as full members. In the deliberations of the local each boy member has one-half a vote. These dues and assessments from the locals form the principal sources of income for the national union. When a strike of unusual proportions is in progress contributions from other labor organizations and from the general public increase the funds in the national treasury. The important part these play in the conduct of the organization was shown during the six months' strike in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania in 1902. To carry on that struggle alone, not including the expenses accompanying the strike of mine workers in progress at the same time in the Virginias, the various unions of the United Mine Workers of America voluntarily donated \$258,344 and the members of the organization paid in special assessments \$1,967,026, a total of \$2,225,370. This is more impressive when it is remembered that more than one-half of the members of the union, including the 147,000 anthracite mine workers, were on strike and in consequence made no contributions to the defense fund. From the trade unions and the general public \$419,954 was contributed. The total amount paid by the United Mine Workers for strike purposes, from January 1 to December 31, 1902, was \$1,889,202. This included the cost of smaller strikes in seven districts besides the ones in the three anthracite districts of Pennsylvania and the district covering the two Virginias. A total of 184,000 mine workers in the United States were on strike for two months and 160,000 for five months during 1902. In that year the total income of the United Mine Workers of America was \$3,010,877.82, and the total expenditures \$2,080,805.44. At the beginning of 1903 there was a balance in the national treasury of the union of \$1,027,120.29.⁷

All this indicates the importance of the financial organization of the United Mine Workers of America. This constitutes one of the strongest features of the national union. At its head is the secretary-treasurer nominated and elected directly by the vote of the members of the local unions. He conducts all the business of the organization concerning the management of national headquarters, having charge of all books, documents and effects; supervises the management of the *Journal*, the official weekly organ of the union;

⁷ Report National Secretary-Treasurer, 1903.

receives all moneys and pays all bills, excepting when the president orders otherwise, and providing that not over \$15,000 is subject to the secretary-treasurer's order at any one time. All sums over this amount are deposited by him to the credit of the Executive Board, and to draw upon these a written order of two-thirds of the board members is necessary. He is required to give a bond of \$25,000. His yearly salary in 1902 was \$1,500 and expenses, but it has since been increased to \$2,500 and expenses. As a rule he reports quarterly to the locals the condition of the national treasury.

Over all the sources of revenue and expenditure the national secretary-treasurer enforces strict discipline with severe penalties for violations of the rules. Each secretary of a local is required by the national constitution to fill out and forward to the national and district secretary-treasurers, before the twenty-fifth of each month, a report of all members in good standing in that local on the first day of that month, together with all taxes and assessments due from it to the national and district officers. For a violation of this provision a local union is subject to suspension from all privileges or benefits until the deficiency is made good. To keep a check on these reports the local secretary must inform the national office of the amount of money paid and the number of members reported to the district secretary, and to the district office the amount of money and number of members reported to the national secretary-treasurer, and he is required to certify that such report is for the full number of members in good standing in the local. Despite these constitutional provisions not a few of the locals fail to report the full number of members in good standing, excepting about the time of the national convention and they do it then in order to secure in the convention as large a voting representation as possible. The reason for their not making the full report is generally traced to the desire of the locals to have their own treasuries well filled in order to meet their own particular wants. Some of the locals have in this way succeeded in purchasing ground and erecting a building for their headquarters. All financial officers of the local unions are required to give a bond "for the faithful performance of their duties." It sometimes happens, however, that officers prove faithless to their trust and abscond with the moneys. The national union makes efforts to have them arrested and punished, but it does not always succeed.

If the members of a local are idle for one month or more they are exonerated from the payment of the per capita tax and assessments until they resume work. This condition may occur through a mine, or colliery, being abandoned or idle for repairs, by a strike or other causes. But to secure such exoneration a request, signed by the president, secretary and Mine Committee, must be approved by the district and national secretaries each month in place of the regular monthly financial report as long as the members are idle. In case the local union is in arrears for two months preceding the one in which the convention is held and has not in every particular complied with the constitution of its district, or has less than ten members, it is not entitled to representation in the national convention.

So well organized are the financial features of the United Mine Workers of America that the national union was able to carry on a widespread system of relief to the needy anthracite mine workers during the closing two months of the 1902 strike. In this relief work no distinction was made between union and non-union men. In fact the testimony of many witnesses is to the effect that aid was furnished as freely to the non-union as to the union mine workers. For this relief work the members of the locals were organized into committees of various kinds. Applications for relief were investigated by one of these committees and if conditions were found as represented, orders for merchandise on local grocers were furnished. On the face of the order was stated the amount for which it was drawn; on the reverse side were blanks for the dates, name, quantity and price of the articles purchased. Both the merchant and purchaser signed the order, when goods to its face value had been bought, and then returned it to the committee, which presented it to the district secretary-treasurer for payment. This officer then secured direct from national headquarters the necessary amount to pay the bills. In some parts of the Schuylkill field it was found necessary for the union to establish commissaries and furnish the needy with food direct from its own supplies. In some parts of the West Virginia field, while the strike there was in progress, scores of tents were erected in the woods for sheltering strikers who were driven from their homes. Food and clothing bought in carload lots by the national union was shipped from the large cities to the disturbed districts and distributed among the strikers.

Not only does the financial feature of the organization indicate that the United Mine Workers is founded upon business principles, but there is still another phase of the work of the national union which more strongly emphasises this statement. This is the holding of an annual joint conference with representatives of the operators and coal mining companies of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and the Pittsburg field of Pennsylvania. In these conferences labor is regarded as a commodity and the possessor of this labor—the mine worker—is accorded the right, through representatives of the union, to “bargain” with representatives of the purchasers of that labor—the coal mining companies—for the price of his labor and the conditions under which it is to be sold. This joint conference movement in these four states dates its beginning in 1885, although there have been periods since then when it was inoperative.⁸ The periods when it was not in force were years of depression in the coal trade, accompanying general industrial paralysis. The United Mine Workers of America had come into existence at Columbus, Ohio, January, 1890, by the amalgamation of the Progressive Union and the National Trades Assembly, No. 135, Knights of Labor, both of which organizations had claimed jurisdiction over the mine workers of the country and between whom there had been bitter and open hostility. To this division in the ranks of the mine workers and to the fact that the young organization was for a time too weak and adverse conditions were too strong, is partly due the failure to hold the joint conferences at intervals preceding 1898. They were restored following the general suspension of soft coal mining in eight of the states in 1897 and have been held annually since then. In Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama annual joint agreements are also signed between representatives of the mine workers and of the operators in each state. The conferences in the six last named states are held separately and are not a part of the so-called interstate agreement of the central competitive district. The agreements entered into, however, cover in general the same specific points, stating the wages that are to prevail along with specified conditions of employment.

Through these contracts and agreements not a few of the

⁸ For a complete and detailed account of the origin and operation of the Interstate Joint Conference the reader is referred to the author's article, “The Union Movement Among Coal Mine Workers,” *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, Department of Commerce and Labor March, 1904, No. 51.

objects of the national union have been attained and undoubtedly better conditions of employment have been secured for the mine workers in the states where they are in effect. Since the great strike of 1897 the United Mine Workers has extended the eight hour workday into the mines of Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Michigan, Kentucky and parts of Tennessee, and has secured for the mine employees of those states increases in wages ranging from 13 to over 30 per cent. Increases in the wages of mine workers in other states have also been secured through joint conventions with the operators, and increases in wages, with improved conditions of employment, were forced from the railroad mining companies and independent operators in the three hard coal fields of Pennsylvania in 1900 and 1902. Arbitration of the questions in dispute between the anthracite mine workers and the operators, by a commission appointed by the President of the United States, was also forced upon the hard coal mining interests. Since 1898 the membership of the national union has increased from 43,000 to nearly 300,000. Of this total membership about 185,000 mine employees, producing annually 125,000,000 tons of bituminous coal, or over one-third of the total coal production of the United States, now work under agreements. Many of the 147,000 anthracite mine workers are strongly organized in the national union, but as yet they have been unable to secure agreements from the coal hauling railroads which virtually control the mining operations. These hard coal miners produce annually about 60,000,000 tons. The remaining 115,000 mine workers of the country, producing annually about 100,000,000 tons of bituminous coal, and employed principally in the states west of the Mississippi and in West Virginia, Virginia, Michigan, Maryland and in central and western Pennsylvania, are as yet unorganized in the United Mine Workers and have no agreements with their employers.

Enough has been said to show that the management of the United Mine Workers of America is as much of a business as is the conduct of any of the great industrial or commercial enterprises of the present day. It directs its strength against those forces tending to keep down the price of its commodity—mine labor—with as much regard for its own particular interests and in disregard of the interests of others, where and when these conflict, as does any of the industrial or other trusts. In order to control the price of mine labor it aims to prevent mine workers from selling their

labor at a lower price than that set by the union. It does this by taking them into the organization, and persuading them to sell their labor at union prices, or by driving them out of the industry, just as the great Steel Trust endeavors to absorb or destroy the independent steel manufacturer, or as the Sugar Trust attempts to control or drive out the independent refiner. The mine worker refusing from one cause or another to be governed by the union in the sale of his labor is the independent producer of mine labor, or the non-union man. In driving out the commodity he has to sell the union is forced to attack the individual as it is impossible to dissociate the one from the other. In consequence violence and bloodshed results. Not only does the union attempt in various ways to control this independent producer of mine labor in the selling of his commodity, but not unlike the so-called trusts, in fixing the price of this labor and the conditions under which it is to be sold, it brooks no interference from other organizations which have mine labor to sell if it feels itself strong enough to prevent it. This is well illustrated by the United Mine Workers practically driving out of the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania the separate organizations of blacksmiths, engineers, carpenters and firemen which existed in one or more of the three fields prior to the recent strikes. We see it again in the union's steady absorption of the mine employees in the coal producing states west of the Mississippi River, most of whom have been under the jurisdiction of the Western Federation of Miners, an organization composed principally of quartz miners, and the Western Labor Union. If it ever becomes necessary, in order to attain its objects, or once attained, to prevent these objects being lost, the same absorption by the United Mine Workers of the coal miners of Canada and Nova Scotia may be looked for.

Trade unionism, under the stimulus of the United Mine Workers of America, has come to be a business operation on a large scale. As a business its success depends upon the close observance of market conditions and the obeying of laws governing those conditions. Most trusts deal with material commodities—goods that have no feeling or mode of independent action. They are thus able usually not only to increase the price of their particular commodity on a rising market, but if they so wish to reduce prices on a falling market. The difference with the trade union is that it deals with a commodity possessed by an individual with feelings and sympathies

and modes of independent action. The general experience has been that when a period of falling prices sets in, the possessor of mine labor objects strongly to reducing the price of his labor—his wages. The past teaches us that he persists stubbornly, even against the advice of the leader of his union, in his refusal to reduce his wages and will go to the extent of striking against such reduction. The trade union also confronts great difficulties in raising the price of its commodity on rising markets largely due to the fact that the consumers of labor, unlike the consumers of most trust commodities, are strongly organized. The part of the intelligent labor leader—of the business manager of labor—is closely to observe the conditions of the labor and general markets and all factors likely to affect the wages of the worker—the price of labor—and to direct his organization along the lines they indicate is the proper course. A study of such conditions is provided for in the constitution of the United Mine Workers by giving to the president, with the consent of the Executive Board, the power to appoint a man whose duty it is to collect and compile statistics on production, distribution, consumption, freight rates, market conditions, and any other matter of interest connected with the coal trade likely to affect wages.